Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY: P:DAO'DONOHUE:CHG
APPROVED BY: P - MR O'DONOHUE
S/S - MR. BRIDGES
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY
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AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 080366

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FOLLOWING REPEAT KINSHASA 3323 ACTION SECSTATE APR 09, 1977

QTE S E C R E T KINSHASA 3323

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, MOPS, CG, AEMR
SUBJECT: SHABA INVASION: BELGIAN, FRENCH AND U.S. SUPPORT

REF: STATE 78875

1. I SAW MOBUTU EARLY EVENING APRIL 8 FOR ABOUT AN HOUR. NGUZA ALSO SAT IN. I CONVEYED ALL THE POINTS CONTAINED REFTEL, STRESSING THAT I WAS DOING SO ON INSTRUCTIONS IN THE HOPE THAT WE COULD CLEAR THE AIR OF CERTAIN MISCONCEPTIONS THAT SEEMED TO HAVE DEVELOPED RE U.S. ATTITUDES TOWARD ZAIRE AND ITS CURRENT
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CRISIS.

2. MOBUTU LISTENED INTENTLY AND, AS IS OFTEN THE CASE, MADE LITTLE SUBSTANTIVE COMMENT. HE DID REPEAT, HOWEVER, A CONCERN HE HAD PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED ABOUT A REPORT HE CLAIMED TO HAVE RECEIVED UNOFFICIALLY THROUGH SOME UNSPECIFIED CHANNEL THAT DURING TALKS WITH THE BELGIANS A HIGH AMERICAN OFFICIAL HAD

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ASKED A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE MAKE-UP, POLITICAL ORIENTATION AND INTENTIONS OF THE SHABA INVADERS WHICH CONNOTED TO MOBUTU A DISTRUBING NAIVETE REGARDING WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON. HE JUST COULD NOT UNDERSTAND HOW WE COULD BELIEVE THAT THE SHABA INVASION WAS ANYTHING OTHER THAN A CONCERTED EFFORT BY THE ANGOLANS/CUBANS/SOVIETS TO SUBVERT A MODERATE AFRICAN STATE. AND JET, HE PROTESTED, WE CONTINUED TO REITERATE PUBLICLY THAT WE HAD NO EVIDENCE OF CUBAN OR SOVIET INVOLVEMENT AND GENERALLY TO GIVE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT TO ZAIRE'S AGGRESSORS.

3. I THEN WENT OVER A NUMBER OF POINTS REGARDING U.S. STATEMENTS AND POSITIONS ON THE SHABA INVASION WHICH I HAD DISCUSSED BEFORE WITH MOBUTU. I TOLD HIM THAT WE COULD NOT HONESTLY ASSERT THERE WAS FOREIGN PARTICIPATION IN THE INVASION WHEN NO FIRM EVIDENCE IN FACT EXISTED, ALTHOUGH WE HAD NEVER DOUBTED THE OBVIOUS CONCLUSION THAT THE INVADERS CAME FROM ANGOLA, WITH ALL THE IMPLICATIONS THAT ENTAILS. MOBUTU COMPLAINED THERE WERE SO MANY STATEMENTS BEING MADE ABOUT ZAIRE AND AFRICA BY U.S. SPOKESMEN AND MEDIA THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO KNOW WHAT TO BELIEVE.

4. I ACKNOWLEDGED MOBUTU'S POINT REGARDING THE MEDIA, BUT SAID OUR OFFICIAL STATEMENTS ON ZAIRE WERE WHAT MATTERED AND THEY HAD NEVER CAST IN DOUBT THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF U.S. SUPPORT FOR ZAIRIAN UNITY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. I ALSO REMINDED MOBUTU THAT THE CURRENT CRISIS IN CENTRAL AFRICA HAD ARISEN ABRUPTLY JUST AS THE NEW ADMINISTRATION WAS TAKING OVER. IT WAS EVIDENT FROM U.S. PRESS AND CONGRESSIONAL REACTION THAT THERE WAS GREAT CONCERN ABOUT BEING DRAWN PRECIPITOUSLY INTO A NEW CONFLICT AND BY DOING SO RISKING ESCALATION. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, OUR

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ADMINISTRATION WAS DOING ITS BEST TO HELP ZAIRE IN WAYS THAT MADE SENSE. WHAT WAS NEEDED FROM OUR FRIENDS WAS NOT CRITICISM BUT PATIENCE, UNDERSTANDING AND FULL COOPERATION. WE THEN MOVED ON TO DISCUSS OTHER MATTERS, REPORTED SEPARATELY.

6. COMMENT: THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME IN SEVERAL DAYS THAT I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GET THROUGH TO MOBUTU, WHO HAS BEEN SULKING IN HIS TENT AS PART OF WHAT I INTERPRET IS AN EFFORT TO CONVEY HIS DISPLEASURE WITH U.S. ATTITUDES AND RESPONSES TO HIS NEEDS IN CONTRAST TO THOSE OF THE BELGIANS AND FRENCH. MUCH OF THIS CAN BE SEEN AS A DELIBERATE EFFORT ON HIS PART TO STIMULATE US INTO GREATER ACTION. AT THE SAME TIME I DO BELIEVE HIS FEARS HAVE BEEN GENUINELY AROUSED CONCERNING OUR INTENTIONS. WHILE WE SHOULD NOT ANTICIPATE A COMPLETE CHANGE IN HIS PRESENT POSTURE TOWARD US, HE REACTED QUITE WELL TO MY PRESENTATION AND I BELIEVE IT SERVED TO ALLAY AT LEAST HIS MORE EXTREME SUSPICIONS. I ALSO BELIEVE HE UNDERSTOOD MY POINT ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR FRIENDS EXERCISING RESTRAINT IN CRITICIZING THE U.S. AT A TIME WHEN WE ARE TRYING TO BE HELPFUL.

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7. DEPARTMENT PLEASE REPEAT TO BRUSSELS AND PARIS.
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